1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

nervous and physically thin and rather undersized. He was remarkable for having an almost complete memory of all that had happened to him after the age of eighteen months. Unlike the vast majority of Lepcha children he showed a marked disinclination to grow up, and appeared happiest playing in the company of children younger than himself. His mother died about three years ago, and when he was about six his father committed suicide by eating arrow poison and attempted drowning, after he had been publicly reprimanded by his wife's family for neglecting her while she was ill. After the death of his parents Chélé lived alone with his grandfather and a middle-aged distantly related 'aunt'.

As opposed to Chélé's psychological backwardness his wife, a younger sister of the Mandal's first wife, was somewhat advanced for her age and appeared a fully-developed self-possessed young woman. After the death of her first husband she had gone home to her family for a year, but in May 1937 she returned to take up life with her husband, staying for the time being with her elder sister. Chélé did not want to get married at all, and would run away from his wife whenever he saw her. Old Kahlyeu used to run after him and gave him extremely severe beatings to bring him to his senses; but Chélé was obstinate, and when he was scolded, used to threaten to drown himself in the river. A few children occasionally make such suicide threats when they are publicly reproached or consider themselves ill-used (most of the children I know of who make or have made such threats have exceptional early histories, usually orphans or adopted children) but these threats are never taken seriously and there is no instance of a child putting such threats into action. But with Chélé people are a trifle anxious; he is an abnormal child, with his exceptional intelligence and babyish behaviour.

The situation did not advance in any way while I was observing it. Chélé continued obstinate; his wife seemed fairly placid and non-attached about the whole affair, but even presuming the two do live together the situation is naturally somewhat unstable. A few years ago Takneum *youmi*'s son Itup inherited a wife under rather similar circumstances; when he was twelve his wife became pregnant with an obvious bastard. This wife died young and Itup married again; the bastard, Seryop Katoo, was brought up as a younger brother of Itup. It also occasionally happens, as in the case of Kurma's stepfather, that a man is childless because he has inherited a wife near the menopause.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

755 frightened of this devil and a great number of Lepchas claim to have heard it cry.

755 762 (3) *To get rid of Chyom moong* (*that is the devil who causes people to die by falling from a tree or cliff*) *or Rot moong* (*that is the devil who causes people to commit suicide*). This ceremony is called Moong Sot, killing the devil, and should be performed by the surviving members of the family in which one member has either died violently or committed suicide. It *should* be performed every three years, but it is sufficient if the ceremony is done after the violent death and at the birth of each new member of the household. If the ceremony is not performed the devil will return and claim another victim.

A dead goat is skinned except for its legs below the joint and is lain on its back with its hind quarters towards the bowman. Beside it is a hole already dug and above it is made a small shelter of bamboos thatched with reeds. Beyond that is set up a red head of banana flower stuck into the ground and against it a post on top of which is attached the goat's heart, in such a way that the blood drips on the banana flower. In a line with this stands a bowman with an arrow in his bow ready to shoot. The Mun is at one side not looking at the post. The other men who are present are all armed with knives.

After a time the Mun starts shivering uncontrollably and summons the devil in a loud voice. As he calls some insect or other will climb up the pole towards the heart, and the bowman must shoot it with his arrow before it reaches it. As soon as he has shot he must call to the Mun to say whether he has hit or missed the insect; if he has missed the Mun must recall it. When the insect is killed it and the goat are chopped to pieces by the bystanders with their knives and buried in the prepared hole; stones and earth are rammed on top of the sacrifice to fill up the hole, and then a second time to make a little mound.

Padem can offer *sakyou faat* and can generally perform some of the simpler exorcisms; there is no general limitation of their power to deal with different devils; it depends entirely on their individual knowledge and capacity. On the whole Padem cannot deal with the more dangerous devils, nor sacrifice animals more important than a chicken or, in a few instances, a goat. The most general form of offering for Padem is the *rum*—the basket filled with various containers. Yaba and Pau, as has been said, can make no sacrifices but can only indicate what sacrifices other priests should make.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

a scene from their own past they describe it minutely and statically, as though they were looking at a picture. They frequently like to make their descriptions clearer by employing twigs or pebbles to represent the people and things described. 537

It is probable that the value which is placed on story-telling has greatly influenced the Lepcha tendency to monologue, to talk as it were in paragraphs, to which I have already referred; this tendency is noticeable even in the speeches put into the mouths of the characters of their stories. Stichomythia is only applied to jokes.

v

Besides being the greatest social diversion, speech is also the greatest social sanction. For through speech is produced the strongest unpleasant psychological sensation that the Lepchas recognise—shame; and shame is on occasion so unbearable that it leads to suicide. 626 157 152 [762]

The training and education of Lepchas from their earliest childhood stresses social approval and disapproval as the motive for adopting or abstaining from certain types of behaviour. A child is told that if he does certain acts—takes other people's property for example, or refuses to work—other people won't like him and won't help him. The emphasis is always on the disapproval of the community in general and not, as with us, on the losing the love of the parents, or the gods, or on the punishment by people in authority. It would seem (though without further evidence this is only a speculation) that this emphasis on anonymous social approval together with the fact that the extended family is a psychologically operative group, and that positive training takes place relatively late in the life of the child, has the result of producing a much weaker internalised control (or super-ego) than is the case when the approving and punishing mechanism is introjected in the image of the parents and parent-surrogates. It is also noteworthy that the Lepcha social organisation only renders possible identification with the community as a whole, and, though to a lesser extent, with the extended family; the Lepchas have not, as most European children and adults have, smaller groups in the community with whom they can identify, and whose approval will support them against the condemnation of another part of the community. 861 155

If this is an accurate representation of the case it would follow 626 154

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

626 that the ego, though normally less disturbed, is also more vulnerable to attacks from without. The mechanisms of self-justification and 154 self-criticism have been brought into play much less. When feelings of guilt are continuously evoked the ego acquires a capacity to deal with them more or less satisfactorily, and is able to balance the support of friendly objects against the actual or believed punishing tendencies of the hostile objects; but when the evocation of guilt feelings depends on exteriorised social disapproval, and when the community which expresses this disapproval is relatively tolerant without over-exacting standards, the occasions when the individual has to deal with such situations are very rare—indeed may never arise after childhood. Consequently the strength of [762] the negative feelings is enhanced by the fact that they are more or less novel; and if the extended family join the community in exteriorising their disapproval the shamed person has no moral support left; in psychoanalytical terminology the whole of the super-ego has turned against the ego and this will produce suicide.

152 The Lepchas describe shame as producing a very unpleasant physical sensation, chiefly located in the belly. When I was trying [673] to discover the Lepcha attitude to sin in the lamaist sense of the word, several people told me that the difference between sin and shame was that, although sin may possibly have some effect on your body or on your after-life, it does not affect you mentally nor do you feel anything in your belly when you commit a sin comparable to that which you would feel if you were reproached for doing your work badly. At one of the big monastery feasts a man from a neighbouring village informed me that turning one of the big prayer-wheels would remove a thousand sins. 'What are sins?' I asked him. 'Killing animals, thinking evil thoughts, doing evil deeds.' 'Do you mind killing animals?' 'No.' I then turned to the people standing around and asked them what sins were? The Mandal, speaking for the community said 'You had better ask a lama; we laymen don't know.' The majority agreed to this; but twelve-year-old Ribu standing by said that sin was killing animals; but it was no sin if the animals were, had been, or might have been eating your crops.

It is extremely easy to shame a person. For example one morning fourteen-year-old Chimpet arrived with an extremely dirty face, after I had made him a present of a cake of soap. I made fun of him in front of his father who joined in; whereupon he turned down his mouth, refused to speak and went and fidgeted with the monastery

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

window with his back to us for a few minutes, before he went away looking quite different to his usual boisterous self. He did not return home till the evening. On another occasion Lumba's eldest son Kutt'r, aged nineteen, came up to have a wound on his hand dressed, after which he went to the kitchen to have a cup of tea. A little later I sent and asked him to come and talk to me and he sent back a reply that he didn't want to. A couple of days later he returned to have his hand dressed again, and I then asked him why he thought I would give him medicine when he would not come and talk to me? He was almost dumb with embarrassed shame and tried to slink away; I had to employ a good deal of tact before I could get him to accept the medicine. Had I made such a remark in front of witnesses it is quite possible that he would have tried to take poison.

Considering the size of the community suicide is fairly frequent among the Lepchas. There have been six suicides in Lingthem and the neighbouring smaller villages in the last twenty years, and in every case the suicide has been immediately subsequent to a public reproof. In five out of the six cases the suicides were relatively young men; the sixth case was that of a young girl of Panung who drowned herself because her uncle and parents reproved her for her laziness and promiscuity. Chélé's father killed himself because his wife and her family publicly blamed him for neglecting her and his work while she was ill. Kurma's uncle killed himself because he was blamed for not keeping his wife in order, and Kurma's brother because he was blamed for his uncle's suicide.[5] The possibility of suicide from grief is admitted, but the only case I heard of was of a woman in the neighbouring village of Lungdeum who killed herself shortly after the death of her husband, and the details of this case were not properly known. Women kill themselves by drowning, men usually with the aconite poison they use on their arrows.

Besides the successful suicides there have been a number of suicide attempts which have been thwarted. It seems to me probable that a Lepcha can establish his innocence on a specific charge by going through the gestures of committing suicide in such situations that he is bound to be saved; some stories of attempted suicide which I heard seemed to me not to have been intended seriously; they were theatrical performances arranged in such a manner as to convince everybody of the sincerity of the libelled person without

[5] See Part Three for fuller details, Chapter Fifteen, p. 396–397.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

762 actually endangering his life.[6] One of the reasons for believing in the guilt of Hlatam the 'poisoner' was that both she and her son Aga must have been aware of what was said about them and neither had demonstrated their innocence by attempting to kill themselves.

Verbal threats of suicide are occasionally made, but they are taken little notice of. When they are drunk Dunbi, because he is poor, and Katel, because his second wife won't sleep with him, threaten to kill themselves. Children also occasionally threaten to kill themselves if they think they are unjustly scolded or ill-treated; when he was young Pembu, an exceptionally nervous man, used to make such threats, and Chano's younger son, who was brought up by an 'aunt' also does so occasionally; to such threats the parents retort that nobody wants such a naughty child.[7]

626 With this ever-present possibility of provoking shame and even suicide it can be seen that malicious gossip and scandal assume very considerable emotional importance. People are worried as to what their neighbours are saying about them behind their backs; one or two even said that the reason for having '*ingzong*' (special friends) in one's own village was so that if people spoke ill of you you would have somebody whom you can completely trust to tell you what is being said. My impression is that very little scandal is spoken, and that when people did discuss potentially scandalous or disagreeable situations they did so very seriously and with hushed voices, taking care that no children or ignorant neighbours should listen to what they were saying.

626 157 The potential influence of hostile talk has I think further results: it is a very strong sanction to encourage Lepchas to conform to the approved methods of behaviour; and it also makes people chary of expressing judgements about their neighbours. If you ask a Lepcha who in his village has any outstanding quality, whether good or bad, he will almost certainly reply that everybody is much of a muchness. In many ways I think this does represent the real Lepcha attitude; affection is based on mutual services, not on emotion, and consequently difference in character is of much less importance than difference of treatment. Only character traits strongly opposed to Lepcha ideals were spontaneously commented on, and those seldom; cruelty, avarice, untruthfulness,

[6] For an example of this see the story of the attempted suicide of Jiroong's sister in Chapter Sixteen, p. 428.

[7] See also the history of Chélé's threats of suicide; Chapter Six, pp. 164–165.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

steadfastly to accompany them home and they then ordered me to take a grinding stone from Lik to Passo at Panung. A couple of days later I and my elder brother took the grinding stones over; my elder brother carried the top stone. We deposited them in a cattle shed without going near the house or seeing Passo. I hated him.' (' To-day he is blind,' *Kurma added exultingly when he told this story.*)

'A month later Passo came with Pashet to reclaim me. At that time the second Dorjé Lapoon was performing the *chéné* (ceremony) for the buckwheat harvest. Passo said to me "I have never done you wrong; come back with me." I replied "No; you have treated me badly; though you are my maternal uncle[9] and my adopting father you have used me ill." Passo said this was not true. I reminded him of the time long past when he had said to me "You need not stop here any longer; you can go away now. My younger brother has got a son Apot." I remembered too in my heart how when Apot was three or four Cherim his father had insulted me and had tried to drive me away. For all these reasons I refused to return with Passo.'

Suicide of elder brother, Ahyok.

'About a year after I had returned home my elder brother, Ahyok, committed suicide. These are the reasons for it. We had two paternal uncles,[10] of whom at first only the elder was married and the younger one used to sleep with his wife: but the elder brother disliked this so he arranged and paid for the marriage of the younger brother. But this new bride did not like her husband; instead she fell in love with Ahyok and used to go to visit him and sleep with him.[11] Then the elder uncle reproached the younger,

[9] Kurma's paternal great-grandfather's mother and Passo's paternal great-grandfather were brother and sister.

[10] These uncles were actually Kurma's second cousins; their father was the elder brother of Kurma's father's father. There was a considerable difference of age between them.

[11] Both these situations are culturally allowed for. What was scandalous was the wife expressing obvious and open preference for somebody not her husband. From the time of Kurma's father's death the elder 'uncle' had been married and the younger brother sleeping with his wife and this had gone on perfectly peacefully. But then this first wife of the elder 'uncle' had died and he had then married the 'niece' of his first wife who was very considerably younger than her husband or her brother-in-law. It was for this girl that the quarrels between the brothers started.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

saying " Why don't you keep your wife in order? She is always going down shamelessly to your nephew's house." At this the two uncles quarrelled and the younger one committed suicide by taking poison. But this only started the trouble. The surviving uncle said to Ahyok " This death is your fault and you must pay all the expenses of the funeral ceremonies." Ahyok protested that it was not his fault; his aunt used to come to visit him; how was he responsible? and anyhow he had no money. But the uncle insisted and a meeting was held of the Mandal and *youmi*. To this meeting Ahyok went taking with him a pig, fifteen rupees and a load of *chi*. I stopped at home with my Mother. My brother admitted that he used to sleep with the woman and the meeting decided that he must pay for the funeral expenses and ignored his plea of poverty.

'Then my brother returned home and went up to the loft and took there the poison *took-ra-kyet nyung* which is used in hunting[22] and swallowed it. Then he came down and said " Those people say I must pay for what is not my fault; so I shall die." He came down in front of the house and walked about backwards and forwards. I asked him what was the matter and caught hold of him as he walked backwards and forwards. Then my brother drew his *chimli* (*a pointed knife which is worn in front of the body at the waist*) and cried " Come on! Come on! I will kill all who come near me." Then I caught hold of his right hand and Mother took the other; he made a lunge at my Mother and nearly killed her but I pulled him back in time. I finally managed to wrench the knife from his hand and then with my Mother's help pushed him on to the ground. I forced his mouth open and saw that his tongue was swelling and his hands were clenched; so I knew he had taken poison. I sent our younger brother to get the root of wild raspberry and hens' droppings; the root was pounded and mixed with the droppings and given him as an emetic, but it was too late and he died.'[23]

[22] 'People also wear a tiny quantity wrapped up in a thick cloth attached to their clothing near their heart as a protection against devils.'

[23] The fact of the suicide is independently confirmed by a great number of people though the reasons which caused it are somewhat different. Jiroong thought that he committed suicide because he was reproved for not working in the fields but instead going into the forest to look for wild tubers. Tafoor knew that the suicide was caused by the inability of some man to control his wife after he had been warned and thought Ahyok's suicide directly followed

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

X/59 *First marriage.*

'My stepfather was the younger brother of Gongyop-bo (father of Gongyop). Gongyop's father had a daughter who had been married to Dunbi's elder brother by whom she had a son Shashoo. She was fourteen years older than me. When her husband died she refused to take Dunbi as *oong-op* as she did not like him and returned to live with her father. She came to visit her uncle, my stepfather, when I was eighteen; we loved one another and she stopped a year with me. But although she loved me she did not want to go and live at Lik; my family was poor and hers comparatively rich and she did not get on too well with my stepfather. So I went to live with her, spending the time between her and my home. The arrangement was made by the Mandal. My wife's brothers did not want to give their sister to a poor man and therefore would not accept the usual substitutes for the "bride price" and I had no money for the proper ceremonies. Besides myself and my wife and my stepson there were also living in the house Gongyop's father and mother and Gongyop and his wife and son. While I lived in that house I was treated like a brother. I had some property of my own at Lik and we all ate together in common. I was sorry that my wife would not go with me to my own home; this was because I had not paid for her.'

Illness.

'When I was about twenty-one I and my wife were living in the field house. One night at midnight I fell seriously ill. The next morning my wife and her son went to work in the fields while I lay on the floor feeling suffocated so that I could hardly breathe. I called my wife but she did not come. Then I started getting delirious and I am not quite sure whether in fact or not I saw the Lharibu Chujen come and talk to me. A little time before I had bought a turquoise earring from Jiroong for four rupees and it was hanging by a string over my head. When I saw the Lharibu I asked him "Where are you going? I am very ill." The Lharibu said "I have come to ask you how much you paid for that earring from Jiroong?" "Four rupees." "That is quite a fair price" he

[762] the suicide of the husband. These different views do not seem to me to invalidate Kurma's story in any way. The event took place nearly twenty years ago on the other side of the river.

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

for the purpose of keeping hail away while the harvest was being reaped. Pashu asked Karma why he had run away: "I never did anything wrong to you," he said, "so when I return you had better come with me." This Karma refused to do. "Although I am your adopted son," he said, "you did only evil to me": but Pashu refused to acknowledge the truth of this. Once, in a fit of anger, he had told Karma to return to his own home, and he now reminded him of this. The Dorje-Lopön was also present at this time and advised Karma to stay where he was. Whenever he had previously run away, as he did on several occasions, his mother had always beaten him and sent him back: but he was then quite small. This time his mother merely said: "Go back, if you wish, or stay here. You are big enough now to decide for yourself, and it makes no difference to me." Karma's stepfather was pleased at his decision, as he was himself finding life none too easy. His wife was devoted to her youngest son, but she did not care overmuch either for Karma or his elder brother, and was long since tired of her husband. Karma, however, always liked his stepfather, and was glad to stay at home and help him.

After he had been living at home for about a year his elder brother fell in love with his paternal uncle's wife, and used often to go with her to the forest. The man's brother knew of this and scolded him for allowing such a state of affairs to continue, as a result of which the two brothers quarrelled. Before the younger of the two uncles was married he was in the habit of sleeping occasionally with his elder brother's wife. From the Lepcha point of view there was nothing wrong in this; but the elder decided that it was time to arrange his younger brother's marriage. The girl selected did not care for her husband and spent most of her time with Karma's elder brother. When her husband found out what was happening he took it very much to heart and shortly afterwards poisoned himself. Karma's brother was held responsible for the tragedy, and told that the least he could do was to pay for the necessary death ceremonies. To this he

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

replied that since the woman had herself come and implored him to sleep with her he did not feel in any way responsible. A village meeting was now held and the brother attended to give his own version of the story. He was, however, held to be the guilty party and ordered to pay for the ceremonies. When he went to the meeting he took with him one pig, a load of millet for making *chi*, and a large quantity of grain. These he intended to give as a peace offering. "It is true," he said, "that this girl and I have lived together": but more than this he would not say. The same evening, when they were all sitting quietly at home, Karma saw his brother climb up the ladder into the attic store-room, where the poison used for hunting was kept. He stayed there some minutes and Karma heard him mumbling to himself about being found guilty, and saying that he could not possibly raise the means to pay. He tottered down the steps and into the yard, walked three steps forward and back again, and then made as if to fall. He appeared to be beside himself with rage, and was holding his unsheathed knife in his hand and shouting out that he would kill anyone who came near. His mother now rushed out and took him by the right hand and Karma clasped his left. With difficulty they threw him to the ground, for he had now become violent. Karma tried to force his brother's mouth open. He could see that his tongue was black and swollen, and his hands were tightly clenched. These, he knew, were the signs of poison. He shouted to his younger brother to run at once and bring some wild raspberry roots, also some chickens' excreta, this being a well-known emetic. He quickly ground the two together and forced the mixture down his brother's throat. By this time, however, his body had started to stiffen and he died a few minutes later.

After he had been living at home for some time Karma fell in love with a woman fourteen years his senior, the sister of a man named Gongyop. He had known this girl for some time, but had always considered himself too poor to marry. Since she, however, was not at all anxious to leave her brother's